

Local Members' Interest
N/A

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 7 JANUARY 2010

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (DEVELOPMENT SERVICES)

**CONSULTATION ON REVIEW OF SUB REGIONAL APPORTIONMENTS
FOR THE PROVISION OF AGGREGATE MINERALS**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the consultation by the West Midlands Regional Assembly on options for the sub regional apportionment of new guidelines for the provision of sand & gravel and crushed rock within the region.
- 1.2 To invite Members to comment on the options which will be forwarded to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder to take into account when responding to the Regional Assembly's consultation.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Aggregate minerals provide the raw materials to make construction products such as concrete, mortar, and asphalt. Within the West Midlands region, approximately two thirds of the sand & gravel produced is currently derived from Staffordshire and there are also significant permitted reserves of crushed rock in the county. The future supply of aggregate and in particular, sand & gravel, is the most significant minerals planning issue in the county.
- 2.2 New guidelines for aggregate provision in England were published by the Government in June 2009 with the advice that the Secretary of State expects that the sub regional apportionment to Mineral Planning Authority areas to allow them to plan for future supply should be completed within six months of publication of the guidelines.
- 2.3 The West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) is responsible for the sub regional apportionment within the West Midlands and intends to produce an "interim policy statement" that will set out new figures for the sub regional apportionment of regional targets for the provision of sand & gravel and crushed rock. The current timetable is to complete the interim policy statement by the end of March 2010. The approved interim policy statement will be a material consideration when Staffordshire County Council is planning for future supply as part of its minerals core strategy.
- 2.4 The policy statement is to be prepared with the benefit of a technical consultation ending on 22 January 2010. This consultation will involve minerals industry representatives associated with the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party and the Mineral Planning Authorities (MPAs). The MPAs are also responsible for consulting with their relevant District Authorities.

2.5 Options for the apportionment of regional guidelines have been developed by the West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party and consultants acting on behalf of the WMRA. The options are due to be released for consultation shortly after the completion of this report so it is anticipated that a verbal update will be given to Members at Planning Committee. However your officers have seen a draft report and can briefly advise at this stage that the options under consideration are anticipated to test the following scenarios:

- Increasing the use of recycled materials as a substitute for primary aggregate;
- Increasing the supply of crushed rock as a substitute for sand & gravel;
- Increasing the supply of sand & gravel as a substitute for crushed rock;
- To apportion guidelines for sand & gravel and crushed rock on the basis of the proportion of past sales within each sub regional area. (This option is based on the method for apportionment of previous regional guidelines published in 2003 that resulted in Staffordshire receiving a sub regional apportionment for sand & gravel based on providing 65.2% of the region's guideline figure);
- To apportion guidelines based on a combination of factors indicating the extent of potential to supply; demand within the area; and environmental constraint.

At the time of writing the report, it is not possible to assess the detail of the options to be consulted upon but it is intended to provide more analysis of the options as part of the verbal update when the report is presented to Planning Committee.

2.6 Government guidance for the sub regional apportionment of new guidelines advises the WMRA to consult the MPAs and the Regional Aggregates Working Party to determine whether the regional guideline can be met at *acceptable environmental cost*. In responding to the options, the County Council will refer to its response to the WMRA in August 2009. In particular, it will consider:

- Opportunity to reduce the reliance on sand & gravel resource by encouraging greater use of alternative aggregates within the region, particularly within the major urban areas;
- Opportunity to substitute fine aggregate derived from sand & gravel resources by using dust and scalpings from the quarrying of crushed rock;
- The adverse implications associated with the current method of apportionment based on past trends of supply;
- The opportunities for the sustainable supply of aggregates that should result from an alternative method of apportionment based on relating demand to local supply; and
- To question the regional forecasts for the provision of sand & gravel and crushed rock given the current economic downturn and the anticipated needs for sustainable construction.

3. **Recommendation**

- 3.1 That the report be noted.
- 3.2 That any comments in respect of the options are forwarded to the relevant Portfolio Holder of the Cabinet.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 Currently, the County Council is required by regional policy to plan for the development of sand & gravel resources on the basis of providing 6.602 million tonnes per annum (65.2% of the regional guideline). Similarly, 1.395 million tonnes per annum of crushed rock is required from the limestone resource located in the Staffordshire Moorlands (24.2% of the regional guideline for crushed rock).
- 4.2 In June 2009, new guidelines for the provision of aggregates in England were published by the Government. These guidelines relate to the period 2005 up to the end of 2020 (16 years). The guideline figures for the West Midlands region are:

Mineral type	Total provision 2005 – 2020 (million tonnes)	Annual requirement (million tonnes per annum)
Sand & gravel	165	10.3
Crushed rock	82	5.12

- 4.3 These guidelines are based on the assumption that there will be a contribution of 100 million tonnes from alternative aggregates such as recycling construction & demolition waste; and a net import of primary aggregates to the region from outside England of 23 million tonnes.
- 4.4 Current sub regional apportionments are based on guidelines that were agreed by the Regional Planning Body in 2003 and related to the period 2001 to the end of 2016. The method used for the apportionment of guidelines was based on an assessment of the proportional share of production from each Mineral Planning Authority area within the region taking into account average sales figures over a three year period 1999 - 2001.
- 4.5 Between June & August 2009 the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) consulted on options for review of minerals policy in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). In particular, the consultation invited responses to questions relating to the revision of sub regional apportionments for the provision of aggregate minerals over the period up to 2026.

- 4.6 In respect of the provision of aggregates, Staffordshire County Council responded in August 2009 by highlighting the following:
- The need to reassess overall regional target for sand & gravel provision and the current proportion required from Staffordshire;
 - The need to make greater use of alternative materials rather than newly worked aggregates;
 - Re-apportionment needs to take into account areas of need that should then be met locally.
- 4.7 In view of Government proposals for the production of new regional strategies, it has been agreed to not continue with the review of mineral policy in the current RSS but to provide interim guidance pending the approval of a new regional strategy under legislation which comes into effect in April 2010. In respect of the sub regional apportionment of regional guidelines for the provision of aggregates, however, the WMRA intends to produce an interim policy statement to guide Mineral Planning Authorities in the preparation of local development documents. The Government Office for the West Midlands has agreed to an extension of time for the completion of this apportionment exercise to the end of March 2010.
- 4.8 Government guidance for the sub regional apportionment of the new guidelines advises the WMRA to consult the MPAs and the Regional Aggregates Working Party to determine whether the regional guideline can be met at *acceptable environmental cost*. The apportionment will also be tested in terms of sustainability by an appraisal undertaken by consultants.
- 4.9 At the time of writing this report, it is not possible to provide all the details of the options which are part of the consultation because these will not be issued by the WMRA until 18 December 2009. It is intended to forward details of the consultation to Members, however, and these details will be available prior to the next Committee meeting.

5. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6. Resources Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Three Revision Options Consultation (29 June – 14 August 2009)

2. West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Three Revision – Minerals – Background Paper (June 2009)
3. Sustainability Appraisal of Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase Three
4. Report to Planning Committee dated August 2009, “Consultation relating to the review of mineral policy in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy”.
5. Report to Cabinet dated August 2009, “West Midlands Regional spatial Strategy Phase 3 Revision: Options Consultation”.

